

NORTH CAROLINA BLUEBERRY COUNCIL, INC
REPRESENTING ALL BLUEBERRY GROWERS IN NORTH CAROLINA



Ralph Carter, Jr. President
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Representative/Senator
North Carolina General Assembly
Legislative Building
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Representative/Senator:

The North Carolina Blueberry Council, Inc. is a non-profit organization of more than 100 blueberry growers. Member farms reach as far east as Wilmington and as far west as Pilot Mountain. Many farms are owned by second- and third-generation growers.

For more than forty years our growers have depended on information and new blueberry varieties provided by the Horticultural Crops Research Station in Castle Hayne. Twenty-eight new blueberry varieties have been developed there in the past thirty years. Over 80% of the cultivated blueberries in our state are climate-adapted, disease-resistant varieties developed specifically for North Carolina conditions.

Blueberries have the highest farm-gate value of any fresh fruit crop in the state, and the blueberry industry in North Carolina continues to grow. All marketing studies indicate that the demand for this fruit has not peaked in this country and there is a growing desire for exports in other countries. North Carolina typically ranks 4th in the US in blueberry production. In 2006, the NC blueberry crop was valued at \$48.7 million (USDA/NASS). The 2008 crop is expected to exceed \$60 million.

The Horticultural Crops Research Station at Castle Hayne is unique among our research stations in having soils suitable for blueberry research. The station also provides office, laboratory and greenhouse space for blueberry researchers and extension specialists. Our growers do not want to lose this important resource and trust that our collective voice will be an important factor in the committee's decision on the future of the Castle Hayne Research Station.

Sincerely,

Ralph Carter
President, North Carolina Blueberry Council, Inc.

